

QUIZ

Q: What's an Oedipal?

A: Your father's bike.

-- Charles Stetler

Long Beach CA

ONE FOR UNCLE SIGMUND

In the corridor just now
I overheard one of my colleagues,
having encountered a student of some years ago,
explain, "I'm trying to replace your face."

ERNEST HEMINGWAY AND EDWARD FIELD

So little in common,
except my regard for them both --

some day I'll sink my hands into their hair
and make them love each other as I want them to.

DEAR RON

well, it happened again this afternoon.
i was sitting in the bar
and this girl sat down across from me and said,
"say, dr. stetler was reading us some of your poems today,"
and i said, "wonderful,"
and she said, "yes, i really enjoyed them,
but do you know which one of them was my favorite,"
and i said, "no, but i'd be very interested to find out,"

and she said, "tarzan -- the best poem that you've ever
done is definitely tarzan."

so i had to explain to her that i didn't write tarzan,
that you did,
just as i've had to explain it so many times in the past.

now here's what i propose:

why don't we just pretend that i did write the
tarzan poem?
i mean, after all, you and i think and write sufficiently
alike
so that i might have written it.
i mean, suppose you had written a poem called
king solomon's mines,
or king kong or simba or crocodile tears or
some such thing --
that probably would have given me the idea
and i would have sat down and written tarzan myself.

how about a trade: you let me have tarzan
and i'll let you have my poem about the snail
that lived in the bathtub and called itself jesus.
i know how much you've always admired that one.

what?
you say it's impossible?
you say the best you can do is to let me have
poor blind tom even up for my death of simon bolivar.

thanks, ron;
thanks, as we used to say in the fifties,
a heap.

OLIVER SIGWORTH

It was the summer I was mopping up my undergraduate work
and I sat in his course in contemporary literature
and was always one step behind in his analyses.

So I'd turn it all off and daydream
about the novel I was writing three pages an evening.
Well, what I really daydreamed of were publication
parties,
talk show appearances, an apartment on the Seine.

Now, five unpublished novels later,
I dictate to my students the same outline of naturalism
that I memorized that summer,

and I watch a young man in the back row
turn my lecture off

to take a longlegged walk along the quays.